
CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

A non-partisan policy board established in 1974 by the Governor and Legislature

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING NEEDS OF CALIFORNIA

Brief 97-2

Background

The California Community College (CCC) system is one of the State's three public systems of higher education, forming the largest postsecondary educational enterprise in the world and serving approximately 1.4 million students. Because of the magnitude of the system--71 separate districts with 107 campuses throughout the state-- the effectiveness and vitality of the system are of critical importance.

The primary mission of the California Community Colleges is to offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level for both younger and older adults. In addition to this primary mission, the community colleges are authorized to offer (a) remedial instruction, (b) non-credit courses and (c) community services courses and programs. Most students are either seeking a general education which will transfer to baccalaureate colleges or universities or training for specialized occupational fields.

How are the Community Colleges governed?

Unlike California's two public university systems, each of which has a strong central governing structure, the community college system has a "shared governance" structure, formed by a federation of independently administered districts and consultation with 16 college constituent groups. The districts are coordinated by a statewide Board of Governors, which offers statewide leadership and policy direction.

How does the system work?

Districts are governed by locally elected trustees and respond to local needs dictated by demographic and economic factors. For example, campuses located close to high tech manufacturing businesses, such as Intel and Hewlett Packard, may

(Over)

emphasize the kind of training required by those companies, while campuses located in agricultural areas of the state may focus on farming and animal husbandry. On some campuses, occupational training is strong; other campuses might place more emphasis on the retraining of displaced workers, and yet others provide stronger general education transfer programs.

***How can we
ensure access
to California
Community
Colleges in the
21st century?***

Anyone over the age of 18 may attend a community college (a high school diploma is required only for students under 18 years of age). Even the most conservative projections forecast that enrollment demand at the community colleges in 2005 will have climbed by 24 percent, an additional 338,000 students beyond the Fall 1993 enrollment. The state's community colleges must find new ways to accommodate this expected tidal wave of growth. Even if the voters approve routine bond measures to build more facilities, innovative approaches will be needed. Among the options that the state may wish to consider are:

- ♦ Encouragement of students to demonstrate competency without the need to enroll in specific courses;
- ♦ Incorporation of educational technology to reach students off-campus, either in their homes or other off-campus sites; and
- ♦ Consolidation of course offerings through increased regional collaboration with other institutions.

***How will the
Federal
Welfare
Reform Act
impact
community
colleges?***

As a major provider of low-cost education and training in California, the community colleges have a major role in providing the educational services required by welfare recipients to move from welfare to work. Within the community colleges, a coordinated approach to serving welfare recipients will need to be developed, including linking with county welfare offices to track student progress, providing adequate child care and academic support services, augmenting college job development and placement programs, enhancing coordination with business and industry, and developing more short-term intensive training programs.

This issue brief is one of a series based on CPEC's long term planning document, *The Challenge of the Century*. Planning for record student enrollment and improving educational outcomes are primary statutory responsibilities of the Commission. In the *Challenge*, the Commission examines solutions and presents recommendations and strategies for providing postsecondary education and training opportunities most effectively and efficiently to increasing numbers of students. For more information on *The Challenge of the Century*, or this issue brief, contact Mary Saenz of the Commission's Governmental Relations Unit at 445-1910.